

PHILOSOPHY 322:
SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY
M/W 10:00-11:20 AM
SMITH HALL 244

Instructor: Cameron Domenico Kirk-Giannini

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Our social positions — characterized by factors like race, gender, sexual orientation, and affluence — shape the trajectories of our lives in myriad ways, determining to a significant extent whether we experience subordination or privilege, whether we are given the benefit of the doubt or received with suspicion, and whether we are regarded in culture as normal or deviant. But what *are* these factors in terms of which we define our social positions? What is the ontological status of categories like race and gender? And what are the mechanisms whereby our social positions shape our lives and others' perceptions of us?

This course is an introduction to social philosophy focusing on three of its most dynamic subfields: social metaphysics, social epistemology, and social philosophy of language. In social metaphysics, we will discuss the metaphysics of social construction as it pertains to three socially significant categories: race, gender, and sexual orientation. In addition to asking descriptive questions about these categories, we will engage with the ameliorative tradition, which seeks to replace our existing understandings with ones that better serve the purpose of pro-

moting social justice. In social epistemology, we will explore the contributions of the feminist tradition and the recent literature on epistemic injustice and ideology critique and consider applications to the philosophy of race and disability. In social philosophy of language, we will focus on the ways in which language can be used to establish, reinforce, exercise, and occasionally subvert relations of power between individuals and groups. In particular, we will study the power of generic language to shape how we think about members of particular social groups and the ways in which certain speech acts can be used to subordinate, silence, and control.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- By critically engaging with the course material, you will gain a detailed understanding of some of the most important issues in contemporary social philosophy, including epistemic injustice, the power of language to shape our social reality, and the metaphysics of race, gender, and sexual orientation.
- The topics covered in the course will also serve as convenient introductions to major concepts in metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of language, such as: metaphysical dependence, social construction, knowledge, justification, testimony, semantic content, and speech acts.
- Through class discussion and structured writing exercises, you will develop crucial philosophical abilities like reconstructing and evaluating arguments, articulating ideas in conversation, and writing clearly and cogently.

TEXTBOOK

There will be no textbook for this course. All readings will be made available online.

LEARNING MATERIALS

I will upload course handouts to the course's Canvas site.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

There will be three significant course requirements. First, you will be required to attend class and participate in discussion of the course material. Second, there will be two in-class papers. Third, there will be an in-class final examination.

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Attendance and class participation: 30%
- Papers 1 and 2 (in-class): 40%
- Final exam (or debate — see explanation below): 30%

Grading Scale:

- A = 89.5-100
- B+ = 84.5-89.49
- B = 79.5-84.49
- C+ = 74.5-79.49
- C = 69.5-74.49
- D = 59.5-69.49
- F = 0-59.49

Debate Option:

Students have the option of participating in a 30-minute, 4-person in-class debate instead of or in addition to taking the final exam. The debate format will be a shortened version of Policy Debate. Students may form their own teams of two and may select a pre-approved prompt or, in consultation with me and another team, design their own prompt. Students who participate in a debate will receive a grade reflecting the quality of their arguments and may choose to apply this grade to their final exam. **For example, a student who receives an A grade on the debate may skip the final exam and automatically receive an A on it.** This is optional: students who participate in a debate are still free to take the final exam, in which case they will receive whichever grade is higher.

SEMESTER OVERVIEW

Week 1 (Week of Wednesday 9/4):

Reading: None (Course Introduction)

PART I: SOCIAL METAPHYSICS

Week 2 (Week of Monday 9/9):

Reading: Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?"

Week 3 (Week of Monday 9/16):

Reading: Katharine Jenkins, "Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of *Woman*"

Week 4 (Week of Monday 9/23):

Reading: Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Illusions of Race"

Week 5 (Week of Monday 9/30):

Reading: Charles Mills, "'But What Are You Really?' The Metaphysics of Race"

Week 6 (Week of Monday 10/7):

Reading: Robin Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?"

PART II: SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGY & IDEOLOGY CRITIQUE

Week 7 (Week of Monday 10/14):

[FIRST IN-CLASS PAPER MONDAY 10/14]

Reading: Elizabeth Anderson, "Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science"

Week 8 (Week of Monday 10/21):

Reading: Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, Chapter 1 ("Testimonial Injustice") and Chapter 2 ("Prejudice in the Credibility Economy")

Week 9 (Week of Monday 10/28):

Reading: Elizabeth Barnes, *The Minority Body*, Chapter 4 ("Taking Their Word for It")

Week 10 (Week of Monday 11/4):

Reading: Charles Mills, "White Ignorance"

Week 11 (Week of Monday 11/11):

Reading: Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory"

PART III: SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Week 12 (Week of Monday 11/18):

[SECOND IN-CLASS PAPER MONDAY 11/18]

Reading: Sarah-Jane Leslie, "Carving Up the Social World with Generics"

Week 13 (Week of Monday 11/25):

Reading: Rae Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts"

Week 14 (Week of Monday 12/2):

Reading: Jennifer Saul, "Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation, and Philosophy of Language"

Week 15 (Week of Monday 12/9):

[NO CLASS MONDAY 12/9; PROFESSOR AWAY]

Reading: None (Review Session)

ATTENDANCE

During each class meeting, I will distribute a unique attendance code to each student present. You are responsible for filling out

the online attendance form with your name, email, and unique attendance code. To do this, visit <http://www.cd.kg/teaching/> and click on the 'Attendance' link next to the name of this course. **Forms must be completed within 24 hours of the end of each class session or you will receive only half credit.**

COURTESY

It is important that all discussion be conducted calmly and respectfully. Professional courtesy and consideration for our classroom community are especially important with respect to topics dealing with differences such as race, color, gender and gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, disability, age, and veteran status.

Meaningful and constructive dialogue requires mutual respect, a willingness to listen, and tolerance of opposing points of view. Respect for individual differences and alternative viewpoints will be maintained at all times in this class. Our choices of words and use of language are critical components of respectful discourse as we work together to achieve the full benefits of creating a classroom in which all people can feel comfortable expressing themselves.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community.

Academic Integrity Policy: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity-policy/>

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Every effort will be made to accommodate students who present a valid Letter of Accommodations. For more information, see: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/my-accommodations/letter-of-accommodations>

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

I am happy to accommodate special needs related to students' religious practices. However, I require that you notify me in writing within the first two weeks of class if you will need such accommodation at any point during the semester.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Counseling services are available at the Counseling Center, Room 101, Blumenthal Hall. For more information, call (973) 353-5805 or visit <http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/>. Please note that I am required to report certain sensitive information you might relate to me to the University.